

State Capital Museum, 211 21st Avenue SW, Olympia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Becoming Citizens: How courageous families changed the world for people with disabilities

■ Special Exhibit Opening Reception, Public Invited

■ Sunday, September 17, 2006 1 to 4 p.m.

▶ Panel Program at 1 p.m.

▶ Exhibit Reception and Book Signing at 2 p.m.

■ Free Event

OLYMPIA – A panel discussion, reception and gallery opening tour on Sunday, September 17, at the State Capital Museum will focus attention on a little-known chapter of the civil rights movement.

The event kicks off an exhibit of photographs, news clippings and family documents compiled by author and artist Susan Schwartzberg. Dating back to the mid-20th Century, her exhibit tells the story of 13 remarkable Washington State families and their political allies who challenged then-conventional wisdom about committing babies with mental disabilities to institutional care at or shortly after birth.

“Becoming Citizens: Family Life and the Politics of Disability” is the book Schwartzberg wrote about those families and those children, in collaboration with the Seattle Family Network, which includes Seattle families and professionals in the disability community.

The book traces the evolution of a new truth over the succeeding decades as those families sought assurance that every individual should have the opportunity to achieve his or her potential.

The families’ efforts culminated in the 1971 passage of the Education for All state law, which guaranteed each Washington child an education. That was followed by

the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 – legislation that put these principles into law for all Americans.

A panel discussion at 1 p.m. will feature Schwartzberg herself, a photographer and visual artist whose work explores biography, memory and urban life. Schwartzberg is a senior staff artist at San Francisco's Exploratorium.

Other panelists include:

- **Janet Taggart**, one of the parent-activists who led the fight for state changes.
- **Donna Overmeyer**, another parent-activist and Community Coordinator for the State Special Education Coalition.
- **Beverly Naidus**, a University of Washington-Tacoma Associate Professor and artist, whose work deals with personal and social concerns.

The panel will be moderated by Jim Stevenson, Communications Director for the Washington State Medicaid Program.

That discussion will be followed by book signing and museum reception from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., along with tours of the exhibit, which will be on display at the museum through January 6, 2007.

The panel discussion, reception and exhibit tours are free and open to the public.

DIRECTIONS: *The State Capital Museum is located at 211 21st Avenue SW in Olympia, seven blocks south of the state Capitol Campus. The museum is housed in the historic Lord Mansion and is part of the Washington State Historical Society. The panel discussion will be held in the Carriage House adjacent to the Mansion.*

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Two “*Becoming Citizens*” exhibit will be supplemented by two associated events later this year:

"Anne Gould Hauberg: Fired by Beauty," Wednesday, November 14, 7 p.m. A presentation and book signing by author Barbara Johns. When two of Anne Gould Hauberg's children were born with mental disabilities, she refused to accept the standard practice of institutionalization and held out hope for the development of alternative care. Her unyielding conviction contributed to the development of the Pilot School for Neurologically Impaired Children in Seattle in the early 1960s. Free program.

Dramatic Readings of excerpts from “*Becoming Citizens*”: Saturday, December 2, 1:30 p.m. Actress and storyteller Rose Cano will read from Susan Schwartzberg's book "*Becoming Citizens*," bringing to life the experiences of "special needs" citizens and their families who forever changed U.S. law.